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ABSTRACT

The literature in the field of higher education fund-raising places development officers into four roles: (1) salesman, which emphasizes soliciting gifts; (2) catalyst, working behind the scenes to support fund-raising activities of presidents and volunteers; (3) manager, which requires organizing fund-raising programs and staff; and (4) leader, with a voice in policy decisions beyond fund-raising. This digest proposes a "development officer paradigm" that depicts the relationships among these four roles. The model includes two "vectors," one describing internal and the other external development functions. The digest also discusses personality traits required for success as a development officer, the field of development as an art or a science, appropriate motivation for entering a development career, development as a "profession," the development officer's relationship to the college/university president and the trustees, the development officer's role in institutional planning, gift solicitation, additional research needed regarding the development officer's role, and future of the development officer's role. (Contains 6 references.) (JDD)

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The Development Officer in Higher Education Toward an Understanding of the Role

Michael J. Worth and James W. Asp II

Fund raising has been a part of American higher education since its earliest days. In recent decades, however, it has become a central activity of most colleges and universities and the development officer has become an increasingly important figure in the administration of the institution. Despite its prominence, however, the role of the development officer is not well-defined or understood. The literature is often ambiguous or inconsistent concerning the development officer's proper role.

Major authors in the field can be placed into schools of thought depending on which of four development-officer roles they advocate as most important. Authors of the "Salesman" viewpoint emphasize the development officer's activity as a solicitor of gifts; "Catalyst" authors view the development officer as working behind the scenes to support the fund-raising activities of presidents and volunteers; authors in the "Manager" category discuss the development officer's internal role in organizing fund-raising programs and staff; and some see the development officer playing the role of institutional "Leader," with a voice in policy decisions beyond fund-raising.

This report proposes a "development officer paradigm" that depicts the relationships among these four roles. This model includes two "vectors," one describing internal and the other external development functions. These vectors overlap, depending on the size of the particular development program. This paradigm provides a model for understanding and integrating the literature, for analyzing the staffing needs of a development office, for planning the progression of an individual development career, and for considering the major questions facing the development field.

What Personality Traits Are Required for Success as a Development Officer?

Authors who focus on the Salesman and Leader roles emphasize interpersonal skills and personal charisma. Those who focus on the development officer's role as a Catalyst or Manager more often emphasize the need for him or her to stay behind the scenes, remain anonymous, and "fit in" to the institutional culture.

Is Development an Art or a Science?

The literature provides muddled answers to this question, but authors of the Salesman and Leader points of view more often describe development as an art related to the development officer's inherent qualities and judgements. Those who favor the Catalyst and Manager roles more often discuss technical skills that can be taught and learned.

What is the Appropriate Motivation for Entering a Development Career?

Some authors view development as a "calling," to be undertaken because of a deep commitment to philanthropy or an institution, often motivated by religious belief. Others are less inspirational in their tone, presenting development as merely a career field.

Is development a "profession?"

There is a consensus that development is not a mature profession, like medicine or law, but perhaps an emerging profession. Some writers express concern that development's advancement as a profession not lead its practitioners to become arrogant or alienated from their institutions.

What Should Be the Development Officer's Relationship to the President?

Authors who see the development officer as a Salesman, operating independently, tend to de-emphasize the importance of other players. Most writers discuss a "fund raising team" in which the president, trustees, and development officer are all important. The development officer's relationship to the president is especially critical and must be based on good personal chemistry as well as a common understanding of their respective roles.

What Should Be the Development Officer's Relationship to the Trustees?

Fund raising is the one area in which trustees go beyond policy-making to play active roles. For this reason, the development officer is often closer to the trustees than anyone else on campus except the president. Most authors see the development officer in a Catalyst or Man-

ager role with regard to the trustees and emphasize the need for appropriate boundaries to the development officer's influence with the board.

What Should Be the Development Officer's Role in Institutional Planning?

The literature is divided on this point. Some authors argue that development goals should be based on institutional priorities determined only by academic leaders. Others, particularly those who view the development officer as an institutional leader, say that he or she should be involved in institutional planning. Research indicates that some development officers play this wider role.

Who Should Solicit the Gift?

Adherents to the Salesman perspective argue that the solicitation of gifts is too important to leave to amateurs and is best undertaken by professional development officers. Some authors of the Leader school agree. Those who see the development officer role as that of Catalyst or Manager say that the president and volunteers should solicit gifts, with the development staff playing behind-the-scenes support roles.

What Additional Research and Discussion Are Needed?

There is a need for more research and discussion regarding the development officer's role. A better understanding is needed of how development officers divide their time among the various roles, how institutional differences affect the roles development officers play, and how the styles and preferences of individual presidents and development officers can be identified and measured in order to create better working relationships.

What is the Future of the Development Officer's Role?

Questions about the development officer's role in the future are related to declining volunteer involvement, the growing importance of planned giving, and the increasing complexity of development administrative operations. The development officer's role likely will change and evolve, as it has throughout the history of American higher education, in response to the changing needs of colleges and universities.

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